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NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:
Teri Ehresman, 208-536-7785, Send E-mail

Szilard named Nuclear Science and Engineering Director

Photo: Ronaldo Szilaard

Ronaldo Szilard

Ronaldo Szilard, has been named director of Nuclear Science and Engineering under Nuclear Programs at Idaho National Laboratory (INL).

The Nuclear Science and Engineering Program at INL is responsible for developing tools and codes necessary for simulating performance and development of future reactors. Szilard reports to James Lake, associate laboratory director for Nuclear Programs.

"I feel excited, there's a lot of work to be done, but that doesn't scare me. I'm optimistic, because there are always solutions to difficult problems. We just need to keep in mind that this is the backbone science in supporting nuclear programs, and in order to achieve the capabilities of demonstrating that we can be a world-class laboratory, we're going to have to continue to upgrade and continue to hire world-class employees," said Szilard.

Szilard has 15 years of private nuclear industry experience working for General Electric Nuclear Energy. He comes most recently from Global Nuclear Fuel in Wilmington, N.C., while still working for GE Nuclear Energy. It is a conglomerate of GE Nuclear Energy, Toshiba and Hitachi. His expertise includes program management in nuclear reload licensing, reactor core design and monitoring, and nuclear methods development.

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Szilard came to the U.S. in 1986 and began his bachelor's degree in nuclear engineering at the University of Arizona. He earned both a master's degree and his doctorate in nuclear engineering from UCLA.

Szilard's research has drawn him toward reactor physics and neutron transport theory.

"I've always been interested in reactor physics, which essentially leads into neutron transport theory, and which is a lot of computational physics. That's what seems to interest me the most. It's just a very small part of nuclear engineering. I love dealing with high-speed computers and computational methods that allow us to solve large-scale problems more efficiently," said Szilard.

Szilard has been a member of several professional organizations. He received the Service Engineering Award in 2004 and the Outstanding Technical Contribution Award in 2003, both from GE, and the Top Industry Practice Award at the Nuclear Energy Assembly in 2003. He is the author of several publications and is specially trained in nuclear power programs.

Other areas of Szilard's specialization include leading interfaces with regulatory agencies for nuclear fuel design, fabrication, engineering and licensing and coordinating and integrating with LOCA (loss of-coolant-accident), transient analysis, thermal/hydraulic and fuel rod design.

The Nuclear Science and Engineering Program at INL combines more than 100 scientists and staff. The three main areas of emphasis in the program are the Reactor and Nuclear Physics Department, the Thermal Fluids and Heat Transfer Department and the Nuclear Fuels and Materials Department. These departments focus on coupling scientific research with test and simulation of engineering principles to help develop new reactor designs, such as the Generation IV reactors and more recently, the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) program.

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